

## **Impact of English literature in Indian society**

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### **Abstract**

*English literature has played a significant role in shaping the literary and cultural shape of India and continues to have a strong function to give a wide view about tradition, and culture of the society even today. Indian Literature in English is considered a popular academic discipline in India as many universities offering courses and degrees in the subject. Indian writers in English have achieved international recognition for their works working on Literature, reflecting the diversity of Indian culture, society, and history. Among them chief are Aurobindo, R.N. Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, K.S. Vankataramani, Bhabani Bhattacharya, R.K. Narayana, Mulk Raj Anand, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal etc. Translators like R.N. Tagore, Amrita Pritam, Jaishankar Prasad, Kabir Das, Bhisham Sahni, Mahasweta Devi, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar have contributed a lot in the development of Indian Culture. English Literature in India reflects the country's complex history, social issues, and cultural diversity and continues to play an important role in shaping India's literary and cultural identity. Metaphysical Poets like John Donne, and Andrew Marvell believe in the investigations of Science and technology.*

**Key Words:** *English Literature, Cultural Identity, Academic Discipline, Diversity, Indian Culture, International recognition*

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### **I. Introduction:**

Birth of English Language in India is said to be emerged with the arrival of East India Company in 17th century. East India used English Language as official Document with Govt Bodies. Gradually it spread among the masses. It came in the form of both as written and verbal. It then came in Academics. It spread with the start of first newspaper, Hickey's Bengal Gazette. It spread more widely coming it in academics. Gradually, it became the part of syllabus and thus English Language turned into English Literature.

Literature comes from Latin 'Literatura' or 'litteratura' a word meaning publish, writing in a particular style on a particular subject. It is an umbrella term that includes everything we see, hear, talk, read, touch and taste. It is the thing to express ideas in printed form or as colour, sound or in any other form for the welfare of all ages of generation covering a wide range of all spheres of lives; animate or inanimate in the whole universe. It involves exploitation, humiliation, or degradation of a particular group, may be related to a particular caste, creed, colour, gender, and religion. It explores certain bonds: patriarchal, caste and religion etc. It expresses culture, tradition: locally, state, and country-wise. It gives the true and real picture of the society. It shows the belief of the people in certain gods or deities. It is a record in 'vast bookish forms', 'painted designs', and 'code forms' stored in different shapes like hard and soft, symbolically and any other one. It contains different styles and forms in different languages. It contains all what we believe, think, work, imagine and what happens every moment. Sources of literature are immense. It may come through medias: electronically and print, from different literary scholars and within a group of a certain field.

Definition of English Literature as mentioned in Oxford Dictionary, "Literature is taken to include oral, dramatic, and broadcast composition that may not have been published in written form, but which have been (or deserve...)"

**Literature as the Image of Society:** Every part of world Literature more or less reflects the society. There is clear reflection of ancient social history of countries in Italian, Greek, , German, English or Indian Epics. Contents of Beowulf, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Ramayan, and the Mahabharat reveals the the picture of ancient society. Essayists like Charles Lamb, Huxley, Stevenson, Carlyle, Churchill etc have reflected much about the literature. It is Literature that gives the wide History of present, past and Future perspectives. It presents the ideals of the past heroes, work of freedom fighters and details of the tradition and culture that is common in India. Through Literature, one can predict the outcomes for future. "Post-independence Literature reveals that there has been the women's quest for her identity and self which provides the society a better look. The indigenous contributing factors like Western Civilizational Development, the Indian Freedom Struggle, and Indian Constitutional Rights of Women tyend the women poets towrite freely and openly for the bold issues like realistic attitude to sex, lust, and frank autobiographical expression," (Roy & Gami: Dayal, 7).

Tagore has depicted Culture and Tradition of India so vividly and widely through his work. Tagore has been humanist in every approach.

**Tool for Women Empowerment:** Literature is a great tool for the empowerment of women. It gives the knowledge of Indian Epics like Ramayana, and Mahabharat. It presents ideals of Rama and Laxman to develop brotherhood feelings and respect of Laxman to Sita to inculcate such feelings in youth to respect women in the way.

It is Literature that describes how women were treated in different Yugas: Satya Yuga (Golden Age), Treta Yuga (Silver Age), Dwapara Yuga (Bronze Age), Kali Yuga (Iron Age). Indian Hindu great Epic, Ramayana depicts about Treta Yuga in which Purushottam Ramchandra ideals are presented. It also depicts how Sita faces Fire Ordeal. Sita declares before the huge public in the presence of Valmiki rishi that she never thinks of anybody else besides Ram, touching any one is rather more thing. If I am really true in what I am saying or absolutely sacred, Prathvi devi (earth mother) should engulf me so as to take me in her lap. She again repeats and emphasizes that if she worships Ram with mind, soul and heart, Bhagawati devi (earth mother) should engulf her to take her in her lap.

In Ramayana Uttar Kand, Valmiki narrates Sita's another 'fire ordeal'. "Yathaham Raghavadanyam mansapi na chintaye, Tatha me madhavi devi viveram datumarati...vivaram datumarati," (Ramayana.94/14-15/899). Draupadi uttered, " Pandavas You had courage to protect me against the small gust of wind. You!, bear this calmly and the wicked pulling me violently before the whole assembly. ..but this Dushasan is causing me unbearable pain staining the glory of Kauravas with sin. You!, tell me clearly, if I am not of yours and then I will decide what to do." (Mahabharata,86/217-218).

**Literature in Middle Age (Medieval Indian Literature):** Medieval Indian literature was dominated by Hindu and Muslim Religions or it was influenced by Hinduism and Islamic beliefs. It was the period of beliefs, customs, practices, and life styles. During this period, Bhakti Movement emerged in which Kabir spoke Casteism, and narrow mindedness of Religions. It also includes Mughal Era that shows how Orthodoxy was rampant. This age is also known as recurrence of Classics that is the striking feature of early medieval Indian Literature. Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchatantra and numerous other Purans came into existence. This age also depicts Indian sacred rivers: Ganga, Yamun, Brahmaputra, Godavari, Kaveri, and Sutlej.

#### **Different Periods in Literature:**

It is Literature that gives wide view of different periods like Maurya Period, Mughal Period, British Period. Detail description of different Periods is given below.

**Chandragupta Maurya** was the first king of **Maurya Period**. He made Chanakya or Kautilya the prime-minister and chief adviser who introduced a book named 'Arthashastra' that contains several rules and regulation of his state: (i) Different type marriages were prevalent in Maurya Period like Asura Marriage in which a huge amount was to donate to the boy's front. (ii) In case of not having any children till eight years, a husband had right for a second marriage. (iii) In case of producing only girl children, a husband had right after ten years for a second marriage. (iv) For having a son, a husband had right for a number of marriages. (v) Only high caste or upper caste women or girls were to study and participate in public activities. (vi) Widow Remarriages were also permitted in this period. (vii) Drinking was totally restricted to women and their participation in public places was not permitted. (viii) Women were allowed to choose their groom themselves.

Under **Mughal Period**, Muslims ruled over India. Position of woman was not satisfactory in this period. It has the following characteristics: (i) Parda System was prevalent (ii) Monogamy was also prevalent in society. (iii) Widow could not remarry, they had to be Sati in the funeral pyre of their husbands or they had to pass the whole life as hermit. (iv) Only Home Education was allowed, so girls of poor families remained uneducated (v) Higher Education was limited to only rich women. Mughal Period, Early Classical Age (800- 200 BC) is also beginning of the Age. It is the period symbolizes decline in religious practice. It includes Medieval Period (500- 1500) marked by 'dark Age', Black Death' or 'Ice Age' and the 'Age of Renaissance'. Great Playwright like Shakespeare, Kalidas, Tulsidas, and Surdas also appeared in this age.

In **British Period** 'education of Women' took a good start. Hunter commission emphasized upon Girls Education. With regard to necessity of Girls education, Declaration says, "The importance of female education in India cannot be over rated...we have already observed that schools for females are included among those to which grant-in-aid may be given...Government ought to give the native female education in India: its frank and cordial support." (Gupta,47).

#### **Overall View of Literature:**

As an estimation, following are the points that show what English Literature serves for the society:

1. Indian English Poets explore the senses creatively.
2. Literature is the Image of the society.

3. Literature strikes a balance between Social Harmony and Profit motives.
4. Literature helps in making better sense of the world, and our lives.
5. Literature gives an enriched understanding of other worlds, lives and times, of the way things have been and how they might be.
6. Humanities and social science play a unique and distinctive role in society.
7. Reading, thinking, writing and talking about literature is both a personal and collegiate experience. It is a model of how society operates or should operate.
8. Literature embodies the values of imagination, identification and empathy. These matter in an increasingly divisive world.
9. Post independence Literature reveals the women's quests for her identity and self that provides the society a better way.
10. Characters in literature model the way literature intervenes in our human lives and can transform them.
11. Class study of literature gives the students the ability to read and understand the world in their own way.
12. Poets, playwrights like Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, T.S. Eliot, and W.H. etc give the society a mirror with their wide range of literary work.
13. Studying of literature, Literary Criticism, Literary Texts make the meaning dynamic socially and culturally. Students become enable to speak on different issues and make a difference.
14. Literature gives wide views of sacred epics and religious books.

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